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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND VFM YABUNAKA ON AFGHANISTAN, NORTH
KOREA, INDIAN NUCLEAR DEAL

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer per 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

¶11. (S) Japan's failure to extend its Indian Ocean refueling operations in support of OEF would be a shock to the United States and others in the coalition whose forces are in harm's way in Afghanistan, and would marginalize Japan internationally, the Ambassador told Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka August 19. The Japanese government recognizes this, Yabunaka responded, and its game plan is to continue its efforts to win public and political support for the refueling extension. On North Korea, Yabunaka outlined recent contacts with the DPRK, noted that holding delisting in abeyance showed the U.S. commitment to substance and urged the U.S. to provide "high-level advance notice" to Japan when the time comes to formally delist the DPRK. On the Indian nuclear deal, Japan will support the consensus, but would withdraw this support in the event of another Indian nuclear test. Regarding Russia/Georgia, VFM Yabunaka noted that Japan, as G8 Chair, will need to figure out how to handle the traditional G8 Foreign Ministers meeting on the margins of UNGA; it will also need to consider the visits later this year of PM Putin and FM Lavrov. The Ambassador and VFM Yabunaka also discussed realignment, beef and Japanese concerns over U.S. policy on disputed territories. End Summary.

OEF/Afghanistan/Pakistan

¶12. (C) Hosting the Ambassador for lunch on August 19, Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka opened by noting that the Prime Minister's imminent decision on when to open the next Diet session will impact both whether Fukuda can attend UNGA on September 25 as he would like, as well as the government's efforts to push for legislation to extend Japan's participation in Indian Ocean refueling operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Fearing that the opposition will make hay at the ruling coalition's expense should the Diet session run too long, some in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and coalition partner Komeito are reluctant to extend the Diet session to deal with the refueling legislation, Yabunaka explained. The ruling coalition is also eager to use the upcoming session to pass a supplemental budget to assist those hurt by rising prices,

such as fishermen.

¶3. (C) The United States understands the difficulties Japan faces in contributing militarily to coalition efforts in Afghanistan, but a failure to continue the refueling operations would come as a shock to the United States and other coalition partners whose soldiers and others are in harm's way in Afghanistan, the Ambassador stressed. The Komeito and others must understand that Japan's refueling mission sends an important signal about Japan's willingness to participate in endeavors important to the international community; these politicians should not think that Japan will get a free pass in this regard. For its part, the United States will coordinate with other coalition embassies to make clear to Japan's public and elected representatives the importance of Japan's OEF contribution. "This is not a U.S.-Japan issue, but an issue of Japan's role in the international community," the Ambassador underlined. VFM Yabunaka expressed his appreciation for the Ambassador's efforts in this area, noting that MOFA has engaged with Diet members and others on the need for Japan's continued refueling operations.

¶4. (C) In response to VFM Yabunaka's statement that many politicians have stated that they will get behind extending the refueling legislation provided it has over 50% public support, the Ambassador stressed that the Japanese government needs to show leadership in this area; if every country participating in the coalition waited for public opinion to come around, nothing would get done. Should Japan halt its refueling operations, it would marginalize itself internationally and become less of a player. VFM Yabunaka

agreed, adding that the Fukuda administration's game plan is to continue to seek public and opposition support for the legislation without giving the impression that an override of the opposition-controlled Upper House is a foregone conclusion. In response to the Ambassador's question about whether the Diet session will have enough time to deal with the refueling legislation and the likely override, VFM Yabunaka was confident that "extending the Diet session as necessary should not be a problem."

¶5. (C) Noting that Afghanistan needs Japan's and the international community's support in other ways, the Ambassador urged Japan to look at additional possibilities for providing assistance. VFM Yabunaka confirmed that Japan is considering what forms of aid it can offer to support Afghan stability, development and reconstruction. On the Ring Road, Japan is "doing as much as it can do" under difficult circumstances. Already a number of road workers have been killed this year, but Japan will continue to make use of the current contractor and its expertise, the VFM said.

¶6. (C) Turning briefly to Pakistan, Yabunaka expressed his government's concern about command and control issues related to its nuclear stockpile, but added that the military made a good decision to stay away from ongoing political developments.

North Korea

¶7. (S) VFM Yabunaka expressed appreciation for U.S. pressure on the DPRK to respond to Japanese concerns on the abduction issue. Senior Japanese politicians such as Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura and Abductions Minister Nakayama are primarily concerned with finding abductees who are still alive, and although there is no explicit reference to this goal in the recent Japan-DPRK abductions agreement, "the North Koreans understand its importance." Should no Japanese -- either from the list of named individuals or otherwise -- be found alive, then the North Koreans will need to come up with a convincing story. As for discussions about reparations and normalization, VFM Yabunaka stressed that it is "premature to discuss money, but we will do so when the time is right."

¶ 8. (S) Japan and the DPRK agreed to have results, "if possible," by the fall, which Japan considers to be towards the end of October, the VFM continued. The two sides have been maintaining good communication, and once the DPRK stands up its investigation committee and launches its reinvestigation, Japan will lift its restrictions on travel and charter flights. The DPRK needs to come up with a credible story if it has nothing positive to provide, VFM Yabunaka repeated, "so things could get difficult in two to three months."

¶ 9. (S) On the subject of delisting, the VFM noted that the U.S. refusal to delist in the absence of a nuclear verification process showed Japanese delisting critics that "the United States is committed to substance, rather than just a deal for a deal's sake." That said, once the United States decides to go forward with the formal delisting, it would be very helpful to have high-level advance notice, the VFM added.

Indian Nuclear Deal

¶ 10. (C) Noting that Indian PM Singh will telephone PM Fukuda August 20, VFM Yabunaka said that Japan intends to take a constructive position at the upcoming Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting and will work to ensure that a consensus is reached. Japan realizes that it will be "tough" to get India to agree to a nuclear testing moratorium, but still needs to take domestic public opinion into account. As such, Japan's position will be that it will unilaterally revoke its agreement with the consensus should India conduct another test. Japan will also call on India to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and refrain from further testing, VFM

Yabunaka said.

Georgia/Russia

¶ 11. (C) The Ambassador thanked VFM Yabunaka for Japan's support on the Georgia issue and in the G7 phone call with the Secretary. Russia's actions have been unacceptable and troubling to us, its neighbors and others in the international community. The VFM agreed that Russia's behavior was "terrible," and Japan decided to offer Georgia humanitarian assistance. As G8 Chair, normally Japan would host a Foreign Ministers meeting on the margins of UNGA, but needs to consider how to proceed based on discussions with its G7 partners. Japan will also need to consider how to handle the visits later this year of PM Putin and Lavrov, as agreed to in Toyako in July.

Territorial Disputes

¶ 12. (C) On the subject of territorial disputes and the labeling of certain disputed territories as "undesignated" by a U.S. government agency, VFM Yabunaka noted that the Japanese government had already raised its concerns in Washington and Tokyo. For the Japanese, the issue of highest concern is the Senkaku Islands, and a labeling of the Senkakus as "undesignated" would be the "worst possible scenario" for Japan and the credibility of the bilateral alliance. The Japanese appreciated former Deputy Secretary Armitage's statement that the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty covers the Senkakus and understand the legalistic position that the United States cannot involve itself in a territorial matter between Japan and China. But an "undesignated" labeling would be the "worst scenario," Yabunaka repeated. The Ambassador expressed his understanding that this is a core issue for Japan and pledged to pass on the Japanese government's concerns. The important thing, the Ambassador stressed, is that U.S. policy has not changed.

Realignment

¶13. (C) Turning to DPRI, MOFA North America DG Nishimiya noted that the Japanese government had stood up two teams to deal with issues related to the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) and "dangers" at the existing Futenma Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS). The Japanese government has been steadfast in its opposition to moving the FRF runway and, on the "Futenma dangers" issue, maintained that the Joint Committee agreement from last August remains in effect. The efforts of these teams had taken the steam out of Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura's and others' Futenma-related efforts. On Guam, the situation is much improved over the spring, and both sides are making good efforts to prepare their respective budgets based on the roadmap. Regarding the Guam tax issue, this is very legalistic and must be taken care of, Nishimiya said; "it is a difficult nut to crack," and it may be necessary for the Department of State's legal experts to get involved, he added. Both Futenma and Guam are in better shape now than in the spring, but we need to make sure that other parts of the realignment roadmap, such as Iwakuni, continue to move forward as well, Nishimiya noted.

¶14. (C) VFM Yabunaka echoed that we had been successful in ensuring that the roadmap is in place, and in blocking "changes from outside." The next milestone on Okinawa will be the environmental impact assessment, the VFM noted.

Beef

¶15. (C) On beef, VFM Yabuaka underlined the importance the Fukuda administration attaches to consumer safety, and said that the offer of 30 months remains as a first step. The Ambassador urged the Japanese government to take steps to resolve this issue, particularly with a new administration coming into office in January.

SCHIEFFER